

# Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program

## Evaluation Criteria

Critical Habitat Category  
(State Agencies)

*“Critical habitat means lands important for the protection, management, or public enjoyment of certain wildlife species or groups of species, including, but not limited to, wintering range for deer, elk, and other species, waterfowl and upland bird habitat, fish habitat, and habitat for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species.”* RCW 79A.15.010

WWRP - Critical Habitat Evaluation Summary		
Criteria	Evaluation Elements	Possible Points
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Locate the project on statewide, vicinity, and site maps</li><li>• Brief summary of the project (goals and objective(s) statement)</li></ul>	Not scored
Ecological and Biological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The bigger picture</li><li>• Uniqueness/significance of the site</li><li>• Fish and wildlife species and or communities</li><li>• Quality of habitat</li></ul>	20
Species and Communities with Special Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Threat to species/communities</li><li>• Importance of acquisitions</li><li>• Ecological roles</li><li>• Taxonomic distinctness</li><li>• Rarity</li></ul>	10
Manageability and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Immediacy of threat to the site</li><li>• Long-term viability</li><li>• Enhancement of existing protected land</li></ul>	15
Public Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project support</li><li>• Educational and/or scientific value</li></ul>	5
Total Points Possible		50

# WWRP Scoring Criteria

## Critical Habitat Category

### 1. Ecological /Biological Characteristics. Why is the site worthy of long-term conservation? RCW 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(iii - v, ix); (6)(b)(ii)

“Paint a picture” of your project for the evaluators - the what, where, and why. This is the “heart” of your presentation and evaluators will draw conclusions based on the information presented about the *quality and function of the habitat* and the *demonstrated need to protect* it for fish and/or wildlife.

**THE BIGGER PICTURE.** How is this project supported by a current plan (i.e., species management population plan, local, watershed, statewide, agency, or conservation)? What is the status of the plan? What process was used to identify this project as a priority? What specific role does this project play in a broader watershed or landscape picture? Is it part of a phased project? Is it a stand-alone site/habitat?

**UNIQUENESS/SIGNIFICANCE.** Explain how the site is unique or significant on a global, regional, state, ecosystem, and/or watershed level. How unique is the site in relation to habitat quality, connectivity, diversity, rarity? How is the site important in providing critical habitat or biological function for wildlife species/communities? How does this site compare to others of the same type?

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SPECIES AND/OR COMMUNITIES.** Which, if any, are the target species or communities<sup>1</sup>? (*“Target species” may or may not be special status species.*) Are the target species/communities geographically isolated to this particular site? Explain the condition of the population of target species. Which species have the potential and likelihood to use the site in the future and will reintroduction occur naturally or otherwise?

**QUALITY OF HABITAT.** Describe the ecological and biological quality of the habitat. What specific role does the habitat play in supporting the species/communities using the site? How is this habitat important in providing food, water, cover, connectivity, and resting areas? Are the size, quality, and other characteristics of the habitat adequate to support the target species/communities within the context of the project areas? Has the habitat or characteristics of the site been identified as limiting factors to the target species/communities?

Revised May 7, 2003

---

<sup>1</sup> A *target species or community* is your project’s primary objective for protection and stands to gain the greatest benefit from the acquisition. For example, a project’s primary objective may be to acquire and protect high quality shrub-steppe. This is the “target community” but that community also provides important habitat for shrub-steppe-dependent species.

2. **Species and/or Communities with Special Status. What is the significance of each species or community listed on your species and communities status table (page 6)?** RCW 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(ii, vii)

This question's intent is to determine the significance of the species or communities with special status and how they may benefit from your project. Some special status species or communities may benefit on a more passive basis, while others may benefit directly. *In the interest of time, you may want to address only the species or communities that benefit the most from this project.*

**IMMEDIACY OF THREAT TO THE SPECIES/COMMUNITIES.** Describe the immediacy of threat to the species/community (e.g., imminent danger of extinction or extirpation; threatened within the foreseeable future, or concern because of current trends; population stable, but catastrophic event could threaten; no foreseeable threat).

**IMPORTANCE OF HABITAT ACQUISITION TO SPECIES/COMMUNITY PROTECTION OR RECOVERY.** Describe the relative importance of habitat acquisition when compared to other protection or recovery tasks such as habitat restoration, captive breeding, translocation, regulatory protection, etc. Describe the distribution or range and, if known, the abundance of the species or community. Identify any recovery plans, conservation strategies or similar plans that include reference to this site.

**ECOLOGICAL ROLES.** Does the species play an especially important role in the ecosystem in which it lives? Do other species depend on it for their survival? Will its loss substantially alter the functioning of the ecosystem?

**TAXONOMIC DISTINCTNESS.** How evolutionarily distinct is the species in question? That is, is it recognized as the only species in its genus or is it one of ten species in the genus? Is it only recognized as a subspecies? Example: Some scientists think that more evolutionarily distinct organisms should have a higher priority for protection. Based on this assumption, if all else is equal, saving the sole surviving member of a genus may have a higher priority than saving an imperiled species within a large genus that contains many other species. Similarly, protecting a full species would normally be given a higher priority than protecting a subspecies and population. Example: The Olympic mudminnow (*Novumbra hubbsi*) is the sole surviving member of its genus *Novumbra*, whereas, the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is a member of a large genus containing 37 species.

**RARITY.** Describe the distribution or range and, if known, the abundance of a species or community. Examples: The Olympic mudminnow occurs in western Washington and nowhere else in the world. The number of populations are fewer than in the past, but 14 of 16 populations monitored from 1993-1998 appear stable and in no immediate danger of extinction. The peregrine falcon is cosmopolitan, occurring on every continent. The two Washington subspecies were endangered; they increased from a low of 1 known breeding pair in 1978 to 56 breeding pair in 1999. The federal government considers this species recovered in the United States; it was removed from the federal endangered species list in 1999, but will be monitored for another decade.

Revised May 7, 2003

**3. Manageability and Viability. What is the likelihood of the site remaining viable over the long term and why is it important to secure it now?**

RCW 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(ii, vi, viii)

This question's intent is to determine whether the site can be managed, and how it will be managed, to protect the target species or communities.

**IMMEDIACY OF THREAT TO THE HABITAT.** What, and how imminent, are the threats to the habitat at the site (i.e., inherent, ecological, human, conversion, abatable and/or non-abatable threats). Are these new threats or ongoing threats? How do or will these threats affect the function of the habitat? How will protection of the site affect these threats? What steps have already been taken to secure the land or reduce the threats?

**LONG-TERM VIABILITY.** What regulatory protections are currently afforded the site (i.e., County Comprehensive Plan, Critical Areas Ordinances, zoning, development regulation, Shoreline Management rules, Forest Practice rules including Landowner Landscape Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans, etc.)? Demonstrate how the site will be managed over time to maintain the desired characteristics. Who will maintain it and what human and financial resources are available to do it? What management needs are there? Is the habitat recoverable? What restorative efforts, if any, are needed/planned? What is happening across the landscape or watershed that may affect the viability of the site? Describe any long-term site monitoring plans and identify who will implement monitoring?

**ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING PROTECTED LAND.** Are there other protected lands (public and private) near or adjoining this site that have complimentary or compatible land uses for the target species (consider wide-ranging or migratory species)? Are they managed in a manner consistent with the needs of the target species/communities? Is this site part of a larger ownership? If so, describe the connectivity and management of the other land.

Revised May 7, 2003

**4. Public Benefit. To what degree do communities, governments, landowners, constituent groups, or academia benefit from or support the project?** RCW 79A.15.060 (6)(a)(i, x)

This question's intent is to find out what the *unique* public benefits are of your project. Public benefit should not be equated with "public access.". The question is not meant to discount projects for *not* having overwhelming support or educational opportunities. It may be that your project has one or the other qualities and not both. Your answer will be scored on those unique qualities and how they are appropriate for, or of benefit to, your project.

**PROJECT SUPPORT.**

- a. Describe the support/partnerships you have from the community, interest groups, volunteers, public agencies, etc. How have you involved these groups in project development? Explain any known opposition to the project.
- b. Describe and document other monetary means that have been secured to help cover the costs for the project, i.e., grants, donations, in-kind contributions, etc.

**EDUCATIONAL AND/OR SCIENTIFIC VALUE.** Describe the scientific and educational values of the site. Is there an identified research or educational need documented in a management plan, thesis, or scientific journal related to the habitat, species, or communities at the site? How likely is it that these opportunities will come to fruition? How accessible is the site for these activities?

Revised May 7, 2003

## Instructions: Species and Communities with Special Status Table

**Species and Communities With Special Status Table.** Complete and submit the table on page 7. This is a required part of the application. Staff will verify the information and evaluators will be given a copy of the table along with the other project materials. This table relates directly to Evaluation Question #2, Species and Communities with Special Status, with emphasis on the significance of the species. As part of the presentation, applicants must describe the significance information to evaluators for scoring.

**Species, Community or Habitat Type.** List each species, community, or habitat type with special status present in your project area or work site.

**Occurrence.** For special status animal species, indicate whether the occurrence of the species at the site is *breeding, feeding, migration, resting, perching, roosting, wintering, rearing, spawning, year-round resident, individual occurrence, or unknown*. For special status plant species, communities or habitat types, enter "N/A" in the occurrence column.

**Status and Source.** Indicate the status of the species and the source from which you obtained the information. Federal and state status and source information follows:

**Federally Listed Species:**

- Resident fish and wildlife—Endangered Species Office, Lacey (360) 753-9440
- Pacific salmon species—National Marine Fisheries Service; [www.noaa.gov/](http://www.noaa.gov/)

**State Listed Species and Candidate Species:**

- Endangered Species Section, WDFW, (360) 902-2515; [www.wa.gov/wdfw/wildlife.htm](http://www.wa.gov/wdfw/wildlife.htm)

**Priority Habitats and Species:**

- Priority Habitat and Species Program, WDFW, (360) 902-2543; [www.wa.gov/wdfw/habitat.htm](http://www.wa.gov/wdfw/habitat.htm)

**State Listed Plant Species and Communities:**

- Natural Heritage Program, DNR (360) 902-1667; [www.dnr.wa.gov/](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/)

IAC will provide data request forms for both state databases. If your information came from a source other than these (such as a consultant or local biologist), please indicate on your form.

Federal Status		State Status	
FE	Endangered	SE	State endangered
FT	Threatened	ST	State threatened
FP	Proposed for threatened or endangered	SS	State sensitive
FC	Candidate for listing status review	SC	Candidate for listing status review
FSC	Species of concern	PS	Priority Species, non-listed but vulnerable
		PH	Priority Habitat
		P1, P2, P3	Priority 1, Priority 2, and Priority 3 (plants)

**Example Table:**

Species, Community or Habitat Type	Occurrence	Status	Source
Douglas Fir/ Western Hemlock/ Swordfern Community	N/A	P 2	DNR – WNHP
Brown Pelican	foraging, resting	FE, SE	WDFW – PHS
Thompson's Clover	N/A	P 2	DNR – WNHP
Chinook Salmon	rearing	FE	NMFS; SSHIAP *
Western Pond Turtle	year-round resid't	FSC, SE	USFWS; Consultant

